

Oklahoma County Commissioners deny Department of Justice's request to inspect jail

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OKLAHOMA CITY – The Oklahoma County Commissioners voted at their October 2 meeting to deny a request by the Department of Justice to tour the Oklahoma County Jail in November.

The request comes as part of an agreement entered into back in 2009 between the county and the DOJ after a federal investigation into civil rights violations at the jail turned up 60 different concerns.

The list of violations ranged from inadequate security and supervision to inadequate access to medical care as well as inmate on inmate violence and deficient suicide prevention.

The feds have toured and inspected the jail several times since that agreement to fix the problems.

But, county commissioners voted to deny this latest request.

"It's going to impede the direction and the impetus that we currently have in place," said Commissioner Ray Vaughn.

Vaughn said a federal inspection of the county jail would be an unnecessary burden right now.

"It does tie up a lot of our materials and our personnel over at the jail for a number of days, and it takes a great deal of preparation to be able to host them," Vaughn said.

Commissioners said they've addressed all but four of the issues brought up in that federal inspection and they believe it's time to end the federal oversight.

"I think we've earned it. Not just because I don't want oversight. But, I think that we've been diligent about it. I think the public sent in all brand new commissioners. They've now sent in a new sheriff. And, so, we've had a lot of corrective changes, and I think we should be recognized for that," said Commissioner Brian Maughan.

In a letter to the DOJ, District Attorney David Prater said: "An alternative to an actual site inspection might be a review of specific documents or, perhaps, the Department of Justice could simply await developments. The risk of precipitous action would be to risk derailment of the reform already underway."

Commissioners said they're aware this could potentially result in legal action.

"They could say, well, we can't believe you're doing that and we're going to come anyway. And, in order to obtain, we don't need your permission if we have filed a lawsuit against you," Vaughn said.

But, Vaughn said he does not anticipate that happening and, if the DOJ continues to press, they would most likely let them in.

<https://kfor.com/2017/10/30/oklahoma-county-commissioners-deny-department-of-justices-request-to-inspect-jail/>